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Student Managers One Of Many Behind-the-scenes Heroes Of Camp

Group helps make things run smoothly at practice

Michael Chastain



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Story Links

STATESBORO, Ga. - The Georgia Southern football team held its 11th practice of preseason camp on Thursday morning at Beautiful Eagle Creek. As camp begins to wind down and the rest of the student body returns to campus, the reality that game week is almost upon us is something you can't ignore.

Just like the previous 10 practices this preseason, a group of students can be seen running around practice, moving equipment, gathering footballs and making sure the practice script is followed to the second. Student managers are the greatest asset for the team to accomplish a smooth practice, making it easy for the coaches and players to focus on their craft.

"If you're like me and you grew as a high coach's son and as a high school coach without having those guys, you realize how important they are in everything we do at practice from getting the drills ready to setting out equipment and moving it to the right spot. They have a heavy hand in making everything function," Summers said. "We're not able to practice how we want to or move at the tempo we want to without those 10 or 12 guys who work their tails off, love Georgia Southern and love our program."

Joel West is entering his fourth season as a manager for the football team and is a veteran when it comes to helping the practice orchestrate as fluid as possible. A manager's job is a demanding and lengthy process during preseason camp with their days stretching from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. or later.

West's day begins on the practice field about an hour and a half before practice, where he and the entire group of managers equally assist in the preparation the field. Then, they will split up and each person sets up their respective station for individual positional drills. The running backs station is the specific area that West is responsible for and he takes pride in pushing the players hard.

"I've been with these running backs for a long time and have a good relationship with Brieda, Fields, Ramsby, and Thornton," West said. "I like working the ball drills and make them work harder, always trying to force a fumble. Coach Foster sees the intensity I bring and sometimes the players want me to let up, but I always tell them the linebacker isn't going to let up on Saturdays. I think I have gotten every player to fumble at least once, except for Brieda so I'm aiming for that this season."

After practice, they spend another hour and a half cleaning up the field and packing up equipment. Head equipment manager [Adam Brooks](#) will then review the day with the management staff and then they will break for a late lunch. West is expected to return at 7:45 p.m. where they will overview the practice itinerary for the next day followed by laundry work until 10 p.m. and sometimes even 11 o'clock. Being familiar with the practice schedule for the day is the key to success for a manager and the football organization as a whole.

"We make sure the practice runs smooth without hiccups, our position during practice is similar to a referee during a game," said West, who stays active constantly in the organized chaos of reeling in footballs and resetting plays. "You have to be accurate and time your passes well, you never want the balls entering the field of play or hitting coaches. The team preaches two hands and so do we; once you catch it you better get out the way, because the next play is coming fast."

The job of a manager has its perks as well, which West can attest to. As a sports management major, he found the position to be a great opportunity to gain experience in the field that he is passionate about.

"The best thing about this job is being apart of the program and traveling to new places," West said. "This is my third coaching staff and it never changes. The team chemistry is always something special each year. I haven't been out of the southeast too much, so when we travel to areas like Idaho last season it is exciting to experience those different cities."

Practice No. 12 is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Friday at Paulson Stadium. Afterwards, the Eagle freshmen will go help other freshmen move into their dorms as part of Operation Move-In.

"The big thing for all of our players is to make sure they are student-athletes at a university," Summers said. "That means we don't isolate ourselves and we make sure we don't think we're better than everyone else. I feel like we do a good job of that and we need to be good stewards in serving our school. That's our role and we're going to continue to show that we have good people in our organization."

Dates, times and locations of football practices are subject to change and may be impacted by weather conditions. Practices are open to the public, but any filming, recording or photography is limited to members of the media only. The full schedule is below.

Georgia Southern won the 2015 GoDaddy Bowl in its first bowl-eligible season, finishing 6-2 in the conference and 8-4 overall. The Eagles, who return 37 lettermen and 12 starters to the 2016 squad, were picked to finish third the Sun Belt in the league's preseason coaches' poll.

Fans can purchase 2016 season tickets and select their seats online, by calling 1-800-GSU-WINS or by visiting the ticket office in the Cowart Building adjacent to Paulson Stadium (203 Lanier Drive). Ticket office hours are Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Season tickets prices start as low as \$75 for all five games.

Meet the Eagles Fan Fest

The GS Football Team will hold its annual Meet the Eagles Fan Fest on Saturday, Aug. 13. Gates will open at 8:30 a.m. and the football team will hold an open scrimmage from 9-11:30 a.m. at Paulson Stadium before the event. The Fan Fest will be from noon-2 p.m. The public is invited to the scrimmage and fans will be allowed to come on the field at noon. The North Concourse will be the only side open and fans may enter through Gate 12 near Bishop Field House.

Between the end of the scrimmage and the start of Fan Fest, fans can expect to hear a few words from head football coach [Tyson Summers](#) after he dismisses the team to their locker room. The event will be the last preseason scrimmage and the athletics

department will have activities on the field after the scrimmage, including inflatables for the kids, 2016 football posters and schedule cards, a dunk tank, face painting, ticket information, cheerleaders, and the fall sport teams will be available for autographs. Concessions will be available during the scrimmage and during the Fan Fest. Additionally, the University Store will be open for fans to purchase all of their adidas gear to get ready for the season.

More information on the dunk tank is available on social media as [Tom Kleinlein](#), [Tracy Ham](#), President Jaimie Hebert, along with players [Ironhead Gallon](#), [Matt Breida](#) and [Favian Upshaw](#) will be in the tank.

Fans will be allowed to get autographs from their favorite football players and Coach Summers at the festival. In addition, the soccer squads and volleyball team, along with all three respective coaches, will also be in attendance, grouped on the field. Fans can bring in outside items to be signed and posters from each sport will be provided free of charge to those who wish to get one signed. Fans will also be able to mingle with the student-athletes during the autograph session and kids can play catch, kick a ball or pass a volleyball around with the players. Also, the lobby area of the Ted Smith Family Football Center will be open during Fan Fest from 12-2 p.m.

Meet the Eagles Fan Fest is free and open to fans of all ages. Parking is also free.

Season ticket holders may also come and pick up their season ticket packets beginning that day. Additionally, donors may pick up their benefit packets at this event.

Georgia Southern Preseason Practice Schedule

Date (Time, Location)

Fri., Aug. 12 (9:30 AM- 12 PM, Paulson)

Sat., Aug. 13 (9:30 AM- 11:30 AM, Paulson); Fan Fest (12-2 PM, Paulson)

Sun., Aug. 14 (TBD)

Mon., Aug. 15 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek); Day 1 (8 PM, Paulson)

Tues., Aug. 16 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Wed., Aug. 17 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek)

Thurs., Aug. 18 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Fri., Aug. 19 (4-6:30 PM, Paulson)

Sat., Aug. 20 (TBD)

Sun., Aug. 21 (TBD)

Mon., Aug. 22 (4-6:30 PM, Paulson)

Tues., Aug. 23 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Wed., Aug. 24 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek)

Thurs., Aug. 25 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Fri., Aug. 26 (4-6:30 PM, Paulson)

Sat., Aug. 27 (TBD)

Sun., Aug. 28 (TBD)

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